

How to Write a Research Gap: A Step-by-Step Guide with Examples

Many PhD scholars spend hours reviewing journal articles and research papers, yet they often struggle with one important task: how to write an academic gap. Supervisors frequently ask, “What is new in your study?” or “What gap does your research address?” If you cannot answer these questions clearly, your research proposal may lack originality and academic significance.



A **research gap** is not simply a topic that has never been studied. It is an unanswered question, limitation, inconsistency, or unexplored area within existing literature that requires further investigation. Understanding how to identify and write a literature gap is essential for developing a meaningful and publishable study.

What Is a Research Gap?

A literature gap in academic research is a missing element in existing research that creates an opportunity for further study. It helps researchers identify areas where knowledge is incomplete or where additional evidence is needed.

In simple terms, an academic gap answers the question: “What important issue has not been adequately addressed by previous studies?”

A clearly defined gap provides the justification for your research and highlights its originality.

Research Gap Analysis Explained

academic analysis is the process of reviewing existing literature to identify what has already been studied and what is still missing. It helps researchers understand limitations, contradictions, and unexplored areas in previous studies. This step is important because it guides scholars to move from a broad topic to a clear and focused academic gap. By doing proper analysis, PhD researchers can avoid repetition, find new research opportunities, and build a strong foundation for original and meaningful academic work.

Why Is Writing a Research Gap Important?

A well-written literature gap helps scholars:

- Demonstrate the significance of their study
- Establish originality and contribution
- Develop focused research objectives
- Strengthen research questions
- Justify the need for further investigation

Without a clear research gap, research can appear repetitive and lack academic value.

Step-by-Step Process to Write a Research Gap

Step 1: Review Existing Literature

Read recent journal articles, conference papers, and scholarly publications related to your topic. Pay attention to limitations, recommendations, and future research suggestions.

Step 2: Identify What Is Already Known

Summarize the major findings from previous studies.

Example:

Several studies have examined the impact of artificial intelligence on student learning outcomes in higher education.

Step 3: Find What Is Missing

Look for unanswered questions or underexplored areas.

Example:

Most studies focus on developed countries, while limited research explores AI-based learning adoption in developing nations.

This unexplored area becomes the study gap.

Step 4: Explain Why the Gap Matters

A strong research gap should explain why addressing the issue is important. Differences in technology access, educational infrastructure, and digital literacy may create unique challenges that existing studies have not considered.

Step 5: Link the Gap to Your Study

Clearly explain how your research will address the identified gap.

Example:

This study investigates AI-based learning adoption among university students in India, addressing a geographical limitation in previous research.

Example of a Strong Research Gap

Weak Statement:

There is limited research on online learning.

Strong Statement:

Although many studies have examined online learning effectiveness, most focus on undergraduate students in developed countries. Limited research explores its long-term impact on doctoral scholars in emerging economies.

Conclusion

Writing a **research gap** is a crucial part of the research process. By reviewing existing literature, identifying what remains unexplored, and explaining its significance, scholars can build a strong foundation for impactful research. A well-defined literature gap not only strengthens a research proposal but also demonstrates the value and contribution of the study.